

ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS LAS CONCHAS ALLOTMENT 2003

I. AUTHORIZATION

For the 2003 grazing season, applications, applications for the following may be approved:

20 to 21* Adult Cattle (c/c) 06/01/2003 – 09/30/2003

* The lower number within this range of numbers is the estimated carrying capacity as of April 1, 2003 that includes unofficial precipitation data for March. The higher number within this range of numbers is based on the assumption that April precipitation will be at or near the 80-year historical average that is equal to approximately 1 inch.

Non-use for resource protection (drought) is being granted as follows:

7 to 6 Adult Cattle (c/c) 06/01/2003 – 09/30/2003

2002 grazing season Actual Use:

Valle Grande Ranch 27 Adult Cattle (c/c) Total Non-use

The authorized livestock numbers and grazing periods are no guarantee that they will stay on a pasture for the full grazing period or the allotment for the full season. Below average forage production may require that cattle will be removed from the allotment earlier than expected. This decision will be made in cooperation with you and based on the utilization for key species and key areas as outlined in these Annual Operating Instructions.

The rotation plan (Table 1) is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances such as lack of water and forage in the pastures. The Forest Service or the permittee can initiate changes of pastures outside of the above rotation plan in coordination with this office. The permittee or this office must submit a written justification before change is made.

Table 1. Authorized grazing rotation.		
Numbers of Cattle	Pasture	Grazing Period
27	Pumice	6/1-6/12, 7/28-8/21
27	Las Conchas	6/13-6/20, 9/23-9/30
27	North	6/21-7/7, 7/20-7/27, 8/22-9/8
27	East	7/8-7/19, 9/9-9/22

II. UTILIZATION/MONITORING

The proper utilization of forage is a critical factor in livestock management on the Las Conchas Allotment. We will be checking levels of use to insure that forage utilization is within recommended levels during the grazing season. Key areas and key species (Table 2) will be monitored within the allotment.

Table 2. Key areas and key species for the allotment		
Site #	Pasture/Key Area Name	Key Species
1	Pumice/East Tank	Timber Oatgrass, Arizona Fescue
2	North/Middle Drainage	Timber Oatgrass, Arizona Fescue
3	East/Big Meadow	Kentucky Bluegrass, Mountain Muhly
4	Las Conchas/Roadside	Mountain Muhly, Kentucky Bluegrass

Both the Forest Service and the permittee are responsible for monitoring forage use and stubble height on the allotment to ensure that proper use levels are not exceeded. We are primarily concerned with use levels in canyon bottoms where cattle tend to concentrate use on palatable feed. We have identified key areas to be monitored on this allotment (see attached map). Maximum allowable use is set for a conservative grazing intensity of less than 40% for the Las Conchas Allotment. Please refer to the Table 3 below for descriptors to aid in determining forage use levels.

Forage use levels should be monitored periodically by the permittee to aid in determining when livestock should be moved between pastures. **Permittee inspection summary sheets (attached) are provided for your convenience in order to record any of your observations throughout the season. You are highly encouraged to record your allotment visits to aid in documenting allotment conditions.** Forest Service personnel will attempt to visit at least one key area within each grazed pasture during the second half of the scheduled grazing period. If areas within a pasture or the pasture as a whole begin to approach the identified stubble heights (Table 4), actions will need to be taken to limit additional forage use. If use within that key area is approaching allowable stubble heights then the remaining key areas will also be monitored and the pasture inspected to determine overall use patterns. This information will be used to determine if cattle are to be re-distributed within the pasture or removed from the pasture.

Table 3. Qualitative characteristics of grazing intensity categories used to characterize New Mexico rangelands (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands).		
Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Qualitative Indicators of Grazing Intensity
Light to non-use	0-30	Only choice plants (key species) and areas show use. There is no use of poor forage plants
Conservative	31-40	Choice forage plants (key species) have abundant seed stalks; Areas more than a mile from water show little use: About one third to one half primary forage plants show grazing on key areas.
Moderate	41-50	Most of accessible range show use; Key areas show patchy appearance with one half to two thirds of primary forage plants (key species) showing use; Grazing is noticeable 1-1½ miles from water

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Heavy	51-60	Nearly all primary forage plants show grazing on key areas: Palatable shrubs show hedging: Key areas show a lack of seed stalks: Grazing is noticeable in areas over 1½ miles from water
Severe	61+	Key areas show a clipped or mowed appearance (no stubble ht.): Shrubs are severely hedged; There is evidence of livestock trailing to forage; Areas over 1½ miles from water lack stubble height.

Table 4. Grazing intensity guide for mountain grassland rangeland in New Mexico (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands).

Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Stubble Height Indicators of Grazing Intensity				
		Arizona Fescue	Western Wheatgrass	Bluegrass	Mountain Muhly	Timber Oatgrass*
	---(%)---	-----Inches-----				
Light to none-use	0-30	8+	7+	5+	5+	8+
Conservative	31-40	6-7	4-5	4-5	4-5	6-7
Moderate	41-50	5-6	3-4	3-4	3-4	5-6
Heavy	51-60	4-5	2-3	2-3	2-3	4-5
Severe	61+	<4	<2	<2	<2	<4
*Determined by personal observation.						

The Forest Service may or may not conduct inspections on the grazing allotment during the ongoing grazing period as time and personnel availability allows. Monitoring items such as distribution patterns, range readiness, cattle numbers, forage use levels, and condition of improvements will be evaluated. The range readiness inspection will determine whether range vegetation and soils are ready for grazing. **The grazing permit holder is encouraged to participate in these inspections.**

III. 2002 MONITORING RESULTS

N/A – Allotment not stocked in 2002, verified with compliance check.

IV. DEVELOPMENT WORK

In order to further develop the allotment, the Forest Service and the permittee have cooperatively agreed to complete the following projects. In general, Range Betterment Funds (derived from the grazing fees) can be used for approximately one-half of the cost of any project. Please be aware that it usually will be necessary to plan projects with at least one year lead time to allow required documentation and to obtain the necessary funding and clearances. Project work agreed to under Cooperative Improvement Modifications are to be completed within established time frames and to the standards attached to and made a part of the agreement unless otherwise modified by the Forest Officer.

1. **Projects remaining from previous years:** None
2. **Projects for this year:** East Pasture Riparian Fence
3. **Future FY projects:**
Pumice Trick Tank

V. SPECIAL MITIGATION MEASURES FOR CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

Seasonal restrictions (March 1-August 15) on construction activities apply in known breeding areas for threatened and endangered species. Any new construction or reconstruction activities will need to be coordinated with this office. **This does not apply to routine maintenance of existing range improvements.**

VI. MAINTENANCE OF IMPROVEMENTS

Maintenance of improvements i.e. (fences, springs, tanks, wells) should be complete and in satisfactory condition prior to entry date to the specific pasture. Please refer to your allotment map for your responsibilities. **If your maintenance responsibilities do not meet satisfactory condition you will not be permitted to turn out or your entry date may be delayed.**

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

District Ranger decisions regarding issuance, denial, or administration of grazing and livestock use permit may be appealed in accordance with 36 CFR 251, Subpart C. The following standard paragraph is included in this Annual Operating Plan for the purpose of ensuring that you are aware of your appeal rights.

This Annual Operating Plan (AOP) is hereby made a part of your Term Grazing Permit. The instructions included as part of this AOP are subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 251. Appeals must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.88 "Filing Procedure" and 36 251.90, Content of Notice of Appeal", filed with the Reviewing Officer Leonard Atencio, Santa Fe National Forest, 1474 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505, within 45 days of the date of this decision with a copy simultaneously sent to the John F. Peterson, District Ranger, P.O. Box 150, Jemez Springs, NM 87025. The Notice of Appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 251.90).

The permittee should always ensure that full and sincere attempts to resolve disagreements through working with the District Ranger has occurred prior to filing a Notice to Appeal. The District Ranger is willing to meet with any permittee to discuss any issues related to the action.

/s/ John F. Peterson

JOHN F. PETERSON
District Ranger

04/07/2003

DATE

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